

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9681

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CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX FIVE

CNO

S E C R E T CAIRO 8332

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: CLEARANCE OF SUEZ CANAL

REF: A. CTG SIX FIVE 100530Z OCT 74 (NOTAL)

B. CTF SIX FIVE 182200Z OCT 74 (NOTAL)

1. ADMIRAL CARROLL, CTF 65, ADVISES THAT CHAIRMAN MASHOUR, SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY (SCA), INFORMALLY SOLICITED HIS OPINION ON KEEPING A TOKEN FORCE OF US, UK, AND FRENCH EOD ADVISORS IN EGYPT TO ASSIST LOCAL GROUPS IN FURTHER ORDNANCE SEARCH EFFORTS FOLLOWING PHASE-OUT OF TASK FORCE 65. THIS ASSIS-
TANCE WOULD CONTINUE UNTIL THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE CANAL. (OPENING DATE NOT YET FIXED AND WILL DEPEND IN PART ON ME
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, ALTHOUGH SCA HAS ADVISED ITS PILOTS TO BE READY RESUME OPERATIONS IN APRIL 1975.) SUBSEQUENTLY,
WE LEARNED FROM BRITISH AND FRENCH THAT THEY TOO WERE AP-
PROACHED BY MASHOUR. UNDERSTAND MASHOUR PLANS CALL ON AM-
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BASSADOR SOME TIME DURING COMING WEEK WHEN HE MAY RAISE SUB-

JECT.

2. FROM OUR VARIOUS DISCUSSIONS, IT APPEARS THREE CONSIDERATIONS FORM BASIS FOR MASHOUR'S REQUEST. THEY ARE: ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL. SPECIFICALLY:

A. DURING PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING INSURANCE RATES WHICH WOULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH USE OF THE CANAL UPON ITS REOPENING, MASHOUR APPARENTLY LEARNED THAT INSURANCE RATES WILL BE SO COSTLY THAT THEY COULD DENY EGYPTIAN PROFIT-MAKING POTENTIAL.

B. TECHNICALLY, AND WE PRESUME THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY INSURANCE RATES WILL BE SO HIGH, THERE IS THE FACTOR OF UNIDENTIFIED UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE WHICH WILL REMAIN IN THE CANAL AFTER CLEARANCE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE MINES WILL HAVE BEEN REMOVED, OTHERS, INCLUDING UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN THE CANAL OR ON ITS BANKS SINCE 1967 HAVE BECOME ENCRUSTED AND BURIED. THEY ARE NOT EASILY IDENTIFIED AND, CONSEQUENTLY, CONTINUE TO CONSTITUTE A HAZARD, PARTICULARLY TO THE DREDGING OPERATION.

C. ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, WE SURMISE THAT MASHOUR AND EGYPTIAN REASONING FOR MAINTAINING AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE IN THE AREA IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

(1) A DESIRE TO KEEP THE SOVIETS OUT OF FURTHER CLEARANCE OPERATIONS.

(2) MAINTAIN INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION AS A DETERRENT TO ISRAELIS WHO WOULD RUN RISK OF INVOLVING OTHER POWERS SHOULD THEY ENGAGE IN AN ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE CANAL.

(3) JUSTIFY EGYPTIAN DELAY IN FORMALLY REOPENING THE CANAL IF SUCH DELAY WOULD PROVE POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS DURING CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS. JUSTIFICATION BASED ON PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL FORCE AS PROOF THAT TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN CLEARING THE CANAL ARE NOT COMPLETED.

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3. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER TWO MAJOR ASPECTS OF OUR CONTINUED ASSISTANCE. THE FIRST IS THE COST INVOLVED. WE APPRECIATE DIFFICULTY IN IDENTIFYING FURTHER MONEY AND HAVE NO IDEA OF TOTAL COST INVOLVED. WE

APPRECIATE FACT THAT COST WILL BE BASED ON ACCEPTANCE OF PRINCIPAL OF RETAINING TOKEN FORCE AND LENGTH OF TIME INVOLVED. ADMIRAL CARROLL IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE CANAL WILL BE

CLEARED FOR TRANSIT OF LIMITED SIZE SHIPS BEGINNING IN DECEMBER.

4. WITH RESPECT TO THE RESIDUAL FORCE, ADMIRAL CARROLL HAS SUGGESTED TASK FORCE 65 BE PHASED OUT IN THE LATTER PART OF NOVEMBER OR NO LATER THAN EARLY DECEMBER. IT IS HOPED THAT BY THAT TIME, THE ENTIRE CANAL WILL HAVE BEEN SEARCHED TWICE AND AREAS OF KNOWN HIGHER ORDNANCE DENSITY, COVERED THREE TIMES. HE BELIEVES THAT WHILE SOME ORDNANCE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN IN THE CANAL, WE WILL HAVE REACHED THE POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS IN CLEARING ACTIVITIES AND THAT FURTHER EFFORTS SHOULD BE DONE BY THE EGYPTIANS THEMSELVES. THE RISK TO SHIPPING, HE STATES, WILL BE MINIMAL ALTHOUGH THE RISK TO DREDGERS, AS EXPLAINED ABOVE, WILL BE REAL. HE THEREFORE SUGGESTS THAT IF THE RETENTION OF A RESIDUAL TOKEN FORCE IN THE CANAL IS DESIRED FOR POLITICAL REASONS, IT SHOULD BE LIMITED TO:

A. A TOKEN FORCE OF ONE OR TWO EOD TEAMS ON A THREE-MONTH ROTATION BASIS TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE SCA, OR

B. TWO EOD TEAMS EMBARKED ON A SMALL SUPPORT SHIP SUCH AS ATF OR ARS.

HE ALSO SUGGESTS THAT EITHER OPTION INCLUDE A SENIOR OFFICER AND A SMALL STAFF. THE UNIT WOULD ACT ONLY IN AN ADVISORY AND SUPPORT CAPACITY TO THE SCA. HE NOTES THAT MASHOUR HAS INDICATED HIS PREFERENCE THAT ADMIRAL CARROLL REMAIN AS SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE; HOWEVER, HE RECOMMENDS THE US SENIOR OFFICER BE NO HIGHER THAN CAPTAIN OR POSSIBLY COMMANDER.

5. ADMIRAL CARROLL ALSO ADVISES THAT THE LOCAL BRITISH NAVAL OFFICERS HAVE RECOMMENDED THREE OPTIONS TO THEIR AUTHORITIES.

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THEY ARE:

A. A TOKEN FORCE OF SIX - TEN DIVERS TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE SCA.

B. A SOMEWHAT LARGER FORCE OF TEN OR MORE DIVERS WITH A SMALL SHIP FOR SUPPORT.

C. A FORCE EQUIVALENT TO THE ONE PRESENTLY IN COUNTRY.

6. THE FRENCH DEFENSE ATTACHE HAS ADVISED OUR DATT THAT MASHOUR REQUESTED THEY EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF PROLONGING THEIR MINESWEEPING ACTIVITY FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THE FRENCH ATTACHE HAS RECOMMENDED TO HIS HEADQUARTERS THAT THEIR PARTICIPATION NOT BE PROLONGED MORE THAN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

7. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, CONSIDERING THE BENEFITS OF US
VISIBILITY IN THE CANAL AREA AND PROVIDING THE DOLLAR COST IS
WITHIN IDENTIFIED LIMITS, WE RECOMMEND IMPLEMENTING ADMIRAL
CARROLL'S SECOND OPTION AS THE MOST DESIRABLE. BELIEVE THE
PRESENCE OF A US SHIP IN THE AREA DOES PROVIDE A STABILIZING
INFLUENCE AND IN ADDITION IS IDEALLY SUITED TO ASSIST US IN
MONITORING EGYPTIAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA. WOULD
APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS SOONEST.
EILTS

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